

The Geri-Actions of the Ageing Amitabh Bachchan

Rajinder Dudrah, Birmingham City University, UK

Abstract

Geri-action as a term within film studies describes a sub-genre of action cinema, in which largely, though not exclusively, men in their middle ages partake in narratives of action and spectacle, whilst simultaneously dealing with issues of ageing bodies that participate in a move, or not as the case might be, towards some sort of an idea of retirement.¹ This article explores how we might make the term work for us critically and discernibly in film, media and cultural studies, especially in the non-Hollywood and global cinematic context. It uses the example of the Indian actor and star Amitabh Bachchan, aged 78, one of the country's most iconic and longest serving entertainers in its cinema and related media industries. The case of Bachchan allows us to think about the notion of geri-action as not just a universal cinematic sub-category but one that we also have to nuance for local and global cultural contexts.

Keywords: Amitabh Bachchan, Indian Cinema, Bollywood, Stars, Intertextual Masala Pastiche, Online, Blogging.

Amitabh Bachchan has starred in over 190 films. Born in Allahabad, India, to middle class parents, he enters acting at the age of 29 in his first feature film role in *Saat Hindustani* (1969). Initially he struggles to make it in popular Indian cinema for the first few years of his career; Bachchan was perceived as being too tall and lanky at 6 feet, with a dark complexion and a baritone voice. Ironically, these very same features go on to become identifying markers of his star persona later on. His popularity begins to rise from 1973, right through the 1980s. He stars in a series of social dramas and action films that see him labelled as 'the

angry young man' of Indian cinema where he is cast as rebelling against crime and corruption through largely working class roles. Subsequently, he is dubbed as a one-man industry for his continued box-office successes in the main role during this period. As the editorial of one of India's leading current affairs magazines, *India Today*, put it in 1980:

At any given time of day, over one lakh people are watching a tall, lanky, slightly gawky figure sing, dance and especially fight on the screen. Every year, approximately four crore people crowd the cinemas to watch this man battle the forces of evil, and it has been estimated that one in every six Indians has seen one of his films. Each time he leaves his elegant house in Bombay's Juhu-Ville Parle scheme, investments worth Rs 50 crore ride on him. So much in demand is the dark, taciturn star that the hordes of eager producers who queue up outside his dressing rooms are told that they cannot expect shooting dates before early 1983. And yet, the offers keep on coming. As French producers Alain Chamas who tried unsuccessfully to sign him for *Crossings* opposite Jon Voight and Richard Dreyfus finally remarked in sheer exasperation: "This man is not just a star. Amitabh Bachchan is an industry."²

He takes a break from acting in the mid-1980s to pursue a short-lived and unsuccessful period as a politician for the Congress Party, primarily to support his long-time friend Rajiv Gandhi of the Gandhi political dynasty. Bachchan returns to cinema from the late 1990s playing slightly older roles akin to his age, and also makes increasing appearances on Indian TV, most notably as the host of the global franchise and popular show *Kaun Banega Crorepati/Who Wants to Be A Millionaire?*³ Currently, he is 78 and shows no signs of withdrawing from performing onscreen, and not least as acting in a key role in films. In recent years he has starred in *Pink* (2016, dir. Anniruddha Roy Chowdhury), playing an ageing barrister with a bipolar disorder who defends three young women after a violent sexual attack. In 2018 he played an agile and playful 102 year old father to a tiresome 76 year old son in the comedy drama *102 Not Out* (dir. Umesh Shukla); and in 2020, in *Gulabo Sitabo* (dir. Shoojit Sircar), he plays a 78 year old miserly landlord who tries to outwit his tenants and wife in order to sell their mansion for millions for himself.

With a media career that has spanned over fifty years, Bachchan has gone on to win numerous prestigious accolades in India across cinema and public life, as well as equally being recognised with similar awards in other parts of the world, and having his wax statue housed in six different Madame Tussaud locations around the globe.⁴ In 1999 and at the age of 56, Bachchan was voted the "greatest star of stage or screen" in a BBC *Your Millennium* online poll, on its website *BBC News Online Users*.⁵ The website noted that "Many people in the western world will not have heard of Amitabh Bachchan" and later in the same piece that "His placing in the Your Millennium vote as the greatest star of stage or screen, and the placing at number 10 of another Bollywood star, Govinda, is a reflection of the huge popularity of Indian films". Interestingly, this was in 1999 and the widespread public use of the internet was still being developed around the world, and hence a reasonable question to ask is, was this poll derived largely from votes in the Indian sub-continent where the internet was available, or were the votes truly representative from the world over? The BBC website did not provide a breakdown of the votes and where they were from globally, but the results put Bachchan at number one "by a large margin" ahead of Sir Laurence Olivier in second place, followed by Alec Guinness in third place. The cartoon character Homer Simpson is in fourth position, ahead of Robert De Niro at number five. All top ten names except one were men, with Marilyn Monroe being placed at number nine in the list.

News of this poll went viral and was used not just by the BBC but other media outlets too. The tone in the website's reportage is presented as a surprise. It draws attention to a fact that many people in the western world will not have heard of Bachchan and with another Bollywood actor being named at number ten, together these two names reflect the enormous popularity of Indian films. Within the South Asian context and elsewhere where Bollywood films are regularly viewed (in parts of Africa, East Asia and the Middle east for instance),

such news is perhaps not so surprising due to Bachchan's and Bollywood's global fan base, and the report's coverage does indicate an Anglo-US centric point of view of stardom which is posited and semi-critiqued at the same time. The report is further interesting as it allows us to think about how fans voting for Bachchan perhaps did so not just because of his Indian identity (whether or not it was predominantly Indian voters who voted), but also how his acting, style, performances and reputation for these facets of his stardom is on par and in conversation with global stars from elsewhere. In this context, Bachchan has been regularly compared to other leading stars in terms of his acting, use of voice and persona, including Al Pacino and Marlon Brando among others.⁶

Whilst the BBC poll is interesting in and of itself, it does allow us to raise the following question in the context of this article: how do we make sense of a sub-genre like 'geri-action' in terms of a cinematic world order where Hollywood often dominates, but is not the only reference point for millions of audiences and fans of non-Western stars around the world? In order to offer a possible answer to this question, the term geri-action will be situated as part of a wider and more inclusive understanding of world cinema, of which Hollywood is one cinema among many others. In doing so, this allows for a polycentric approach to world cinema studies and allows us to begin to think more carefully about terms such as geri-action within particular local and global cultural contexts. The verb 'actions' will also be used to denote doing things in a number of, and in simultaneous ways, as it is argued that this is a more fitting way to appreciate the plural geri-actions of Amitabh Bachchan in popular Indian cinema.

Lucia Nagib's definition of world cinema as polycentric is a useful step towards furthering this discussion (Nagib 2006). Drawing on Ella Shohat and Robert Stam's original contribution to debates about multiculturalism in and through dominant global media and its representations, Nagib extends their idea of 'polycentric multiculturalism' (Shohat and Stam 1994: 48-49) to polycentric cinema. Nagib is keen to move away from thinking about world cinema in a binary relation to Hollywood cinema exclusively. For her, polycentric cinema is the 'inclusive method of a world made of interconnected cinemas' (Nagib 2006: 34) and she goes on to persuasively argue this as:

World cinema is simply the cinema of the world. It has no centre. It is not the other but it is us. It has no beginning and no end, but is a global process. World cinema, as the world itself, is circulation.

World cinema is not a discipline, but a method, a way of cutting across film history according to waves of relevant films and movements, thus creating flexible geographies.

As a positive, inclusive, democratic concept, world cinema allows all sorts of theoretical approaches, provided they are not based on the binary perspective. (Nagib 2006: 35)⁷

Placing geri-action cinema as a sub-genre in film studies as part of a more inclusive approach towards world cinema enables us to consider it not simply in terms of its functioning and pleasures in a predominantly Hollywood context, but also encourages us to think about how geri-actions in a given cinema might work across and in relation to other different cinemas, and often simultaneously. Bachchan's prolific career has in fact been developed in a film industry, namely Bollywood, which itself has grown out of an amalgamation of traditional Indian art and popular cultural forms, with cinematic referents from around the world, including Hollywood. In the genre of masala cinema⁸ this is where Bachchan has excelled his reputation as an action hero in popular Hindi cinema, but often almost always in relation to a hero that is recognisably an Indian protagonist that is in

dialogue with referents from around the world. For instance, in one of his many famous films from the 1980s, *Coolie* (1983), Bachchan plays the role of Iqbal, a Bombay railway porter.

An image that was predominantly used in the film's many posters depicts Bachchan dressed in red coolie attire in the centre of the image, with other characters and scenes from the film occurring around him. This is a standard model for a poster of the masala genre which seeks to capture as many different aspects of the film's offerings as a vehicle of promotion.⁹

Bachchan is undertaking two forms of action: in the centre of the frame he is holding a hammer and sickle together, forming the sign of Communism and representing industrial and agricultural workers, and in another part of the poster he is beating up a villain. Around him in the left background is the film's heroine, actress Rati Agnihotri, dressed in green from one of the film's many song and dance sequences, with other supporting actors placed in the bottom right. This poster in particular has been reproduced from an original hand painted one, and other posters also exist with direct photo stills taken from the set of the movie.

Bachchan occupies a number of referents at the same time: action hero, song and dance, romance, social drama, and with the main image of the hammer and sickle symbol, not only is this a film about working class revolt and protest in the Indian context, it is also a homage to Soviet communist cinema and Bachchan's star persona standing tall akin to any action hero from around the world. The film also features Indian and western song and dance styles as part of its music soundtrack and wider mise en scène and these are also replicated in other posters for the film. In these ways, Bachchan's geri-actions need to be considered as an assortment of not only Indian masala but also drawing on wider social and cultural media references from world cinema, including Hollywood.



Film poster of *Coolie* (Writ. Kader Khan, Jeevanprabha Desai, K.K. Shukla. Dir.

Prayag Raj and Manmohan Desai, 1983)

Considering geri-action cinema as part of a polycentric framework of world cinema allows us to ask further and elaborate on what kind of star is our actor as he or she moves through their geri-action years; and in the case of Bachchan how does he continue to maintain or modify his persona well into his golden years of acting and stardom at 78?¹⁰ Answering this question entails holding on to the imprint of Bachchan's earlier star persona and considering in what ways is it being developed in the current moment? In doing so, this warrants a recourse to star studies in aiding us in our clarification of geri-action as a term for someone like Bachchan in the popular Indian cinema context.

The foundational scholarship on film stars by Richard Dyer, most notably in his two monographs *Stars* (1979) and *Heavenly Bodies: Film Stars and Society* (1986), helped paved the way for star studies as a sub-field in cinema studies. Drawing eclectically from sociology, media and literary studies, 'Dyer famously drew attention to the analysis of stars, on and off screen, in the realm of representation and ideology: stars were semiotic signs that could be 'read' and deconstructed' (Holmes and Redmond 2010:1). Dyer's focus on the ideological and political function of stardom as a cultural phenomenon drew attention to the collective and individual fantasies that stars could engender, especially within a capitalist economy. His work also advocated for sophisticated conceptual tools for reading the star 'image', as he did in *Heavenly Bodies*, in order to consider the cultural work that such image does, and how it is constituted.

John Ellis, another proponent of early film and media studies, who in part builds on Dyer's primary work in *Stars* (1979), advances a model for an analysis of stars in his book

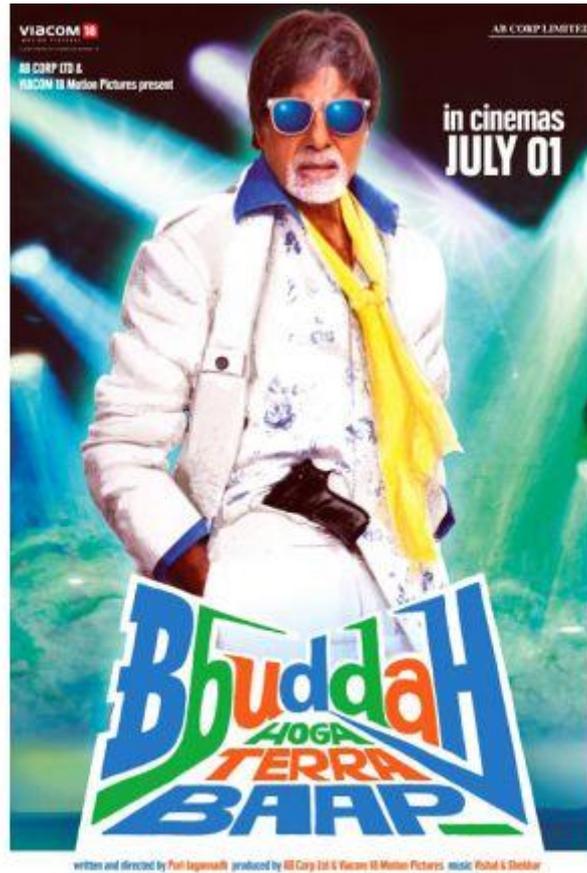
Visible Fictions (1982). In this work, he lays out an approach to the study of stars that considers them through: precursor and historical texts; narrative placements in films that allows stars to accrue a symbolic biography; paying attention to how reel and real life intersect in the development of the star's persona; how the star is a material phenomenon and through features such as his/her physicality, movement and voice they are able to enact out aspects of their persona; and how the star is an icon that helps promote cultural and capital exchanges, not least around commodity goods and brand endorsements.

Vijay Mishra in his book *Bollywood Cinema* (2002) extends Ellis' model of analysis to further consider popular Indian cinema stars through the added feature of their performance of song and dance, and dialogue – two crucial aspects of a successful star's persona in mainstream Bollywood cinema. Mishra further considers how the most popular and successful stars go on to achieve a semi-divine status, and in some cases are worshipped literally by their fans that is akin to religious and mythological fervor.

These combined seven features of star studies from Ellis and Mishra's work can also be usefully attached to a consideration of Bachchan's glocal-ness, or the interplay between the national specificity of a celebrity, their global reach and the local or 'glocal' ways in which they are made sense of (Diane Negra, 2001, Ginnette Vincendeau 2000, and Pramod Nayer 2009)¹¹. Bachchan in his late geri-action and golden years is an avid user of social media, staying in touch with his fans while promoting himself and his media activities. In June 2020 his Twitter account displays him as having 42.8 million followers, and many read his personal blog 'Bachchan Bol (Bachchan Speaks)', which he updates daily on the hosting site Tumblr.com. It appears that in order to consider aptly the geri-actions of Bachchan is to

undertake an analysis of his geri-action persona on screen and also how he mediates his latter day star persona online. In order to undertake an analysis of his geri-actions (in their plurality), sequences from one of Bachchan's most self-reflexive geri-action movies *Bbuddah Hoga Tera Baap* (2011) are analysed, as is his blog Bachchan Bol.

Bbuddah Hoga Tera Baap (hereafter BHTB), translated as a retort 'Your father must be old, not me', was a July 2011 release aimed at the summer blockbuster market. Bachchan features as a geri-action hero at the age of 69, well into his golden years rather than the years 45 to 65 prescribed for middle age that usually mark out geri-action cinema. Nonetheless, his fashion, performance, swag and attitude is nothing short of a spritely geri-action hero that reflexively plays to Bachchan's earlier action year heroes, while also playing up to aspects of the geri-action sub-genre. The film is set in Mumbai as Vijju Malhotra (Bachchan) returns to India from France after many years. He is hired as hit man by the underworld to assassinate a young Assistant Commissioner of Police who is thwarting the mobsters' plans. The ACP Karan Malhotra (Sonu Sood) turns out to be Vijju's son, and along the way Vijju meets with his estranged wife Sita (Hema Malini) and former girlfriend Kamini (Raveena Tandon). Through a series of action, romantic and familial melodramatic encounters that take us through tropes of the masala genre, Vijju attempts to reconcile with his wife and reveal his identity to his son while taking on the underworld.



Film poster for *Buddha Hoga Tera Baap* (Story. Puri Jagannadh. Dir. Puri Jagannadh, 2011)

The film is declared economically profitable and reviews in the trade press confirm the geri-action and masala features of the film, with Bachchan being the key draw for seasoned fans and newcomers alike.¹² The production of the film and the play on Bachchan's action persona is actively constructed both on and off-screen by Bachchan and his close associates. The film is co-produced by his son, also an actor, Abhishek Bachchan, and co-distributed through his family-owned media entertainment company Amitabh Bachchan Corporation Ltd. Bachchan also lends his singing voice on four of the five songs in the film, thereby making this a Bachchan-led venture from the outset and also a careful management of the brand of Bachchan as a geri-action hero.

José Arroyo (1999) in his editing of essays and reviews in the reader *Action/Spectacle Cinema* defines the action genre as a "mode"; particularly in the way it has often been critically denigrated by film journalism and in the academy, in the industrial context of Hollywood's requirement for box office blockbusters, and in the films' formal properties in terms of the use of technology such as Steadicam and computer-generated effects.¹³ These aspects are abundant in geri-action cinema and with the focus on older actors doing high end action, there is an added emphasis on intertextuality and pastiche, often organised through humour. This is certainly the case in BHTB.

In film studies intertextuality has primarily been understood through Julia Kristeva's use of Mikhail Bakhtin's notion of the interrelations of prior cultural references within a new social text.¹⁴ Intertextuality is played out through features such as plagiarism, epigraph, allusion or pastiche, and the audience's appreciation of such features are key to an intertextual reference being perceived as successful. Intertextuality is often a device that is used consciously by the film's director and creative team that is intended for active consumption by the spectator.

Richard Dyer (2007) in his book on pastiche, draws attention to the varied history of the term across film and related media (namely music, art and literature), and points to its significance as a means of representing historicity in terms of feeling. For Dyer, pastiche involves combination as well as playing promiscuously on imitation of previous cultural referents. What emerges in BHTB is what I would like to term as a particular kind of 'intertextual masala pastiche', and this can be seen in the film's promotional publicity and the film itself. One of the trailers that was aired widely and globally via TV, social media and in

cinemas ahead of its release is one minute in duration¹⁵. It is loud and colourful and features Bachchan as the key protagonist from the film (the only other characters seen are minor goons being beaten up by him). The trailer opens with the film's title track sung in a cappella: Bachchan and his real life son Abhishek Bachchan rap in Hindi with a beatbox music rhythm underlying their voices. There is a montage made up of a burst of thirty short scenes from the film depicting Bachchan in various action poses across the masala spectrum – dialogues, fighting, singing and dancing, and romance. At the outset, Bachchan speaks a black comedic dialogue that sets up an expectation of the tone of the humour to follow in the movie: 'Go ahead and shoot. If I die it will be from a bullet, not from BP (blood pressure) or sugar (diabetes)'. Interspersed in the montage are colourful and bold captions in capital letters that introduce him via the names of his previous films and character personas as a younger action hero: 'He Was/He Is/He FOREVER WILL BE/THE GREAT GAMBLER/LAWARIS (ownerless)/TOOFAN (hurricane)/JAADUGAR (magician)/SHAHENSHAH (emperor)/SHARAABI (alcoholic)/SARKAR (boss)/TIGER/MARD (Man)/Don.'

The lyrics from the title track, which also serve as a leitmotif signature tune throughout the film, tell us that Bachchan, as Vijju, is amongst other things '...A little bit action, a little bit Jackson...'. This is a clear play on the action genre in Hindi cinema but one that is coupled with dance moves from those of the late US pop star Michael Jackson. While Bachchan might well have danced quoting or imitating Michael Jackson in his earlier films, in BHTB there is an insistence that even in his golden years he still has the ability to dance at the required level, albeit even if it is done in a rather tongue-in-cheek manner and at a slower pace, a pastiche of his earlier self.

Bachchan's song and dance are explicitly on show in the playful music number 'Go Meera Go' where the intertextual masala pastiche can be seen as being elaborated further.¹⁶ Upon Bachchan's return to Mumbai he enters a bar where members of the underworld are known to hang out. He is confronted about his identity, not least due to the carefree attitude in which he enters the den and takes up space at a drinking table, but also to due to his stand out attire: a white two piece suit, multi-coloured floral shirt, white shoes, white socks, two watches on the same wrist – one yellow, one blue - with a bright yellow soft scarf around his neck, and designer specs with a thick frame that match his outfit. 'Who are you? ... Are you new to the city?' asks a goon. 'New? [Bachchan chuckles] I've a very old connection with Mumbai. Have a seat I'll give you my bio-data. Come on. Have a seat.' Musical strings begin to play, invoking the popular track '*Khaike paan Banares wala*/Eat the betel leaf from Benares' from his 1978 masala action film, *Don*. Bachchan goes on '... Nowadays youngsters like you are singing my songs. They're copying my style. Now I'll show you what the original is. You want to see it?' He whistles for the show to begin and an entry of white female back up dancers fill the bar and the 'Go Meera Go' track starts: an infectious disco rhythm and re-mix of some of his earlier songs and music, with rapping in Hinglish too.

The song is a play on Bachchan as the "Daddy" figure in popular Hindi cinema, an ageing and respected persona who also demands respect in the diegetic world of BHTB as Vijju. He reprises the role of a Don Mafioso figure which is layered with intertextual throwbacks via his costume, the genre of disco and rap from Bollywood, humour at himself, and his recourse to his association with the city of Mumbai where he makes his career and home; he also cites his earlier films and songs via the music and lyrics of this song's medley. The intertextuality is literally mixed up further and pastiched through a masala blend, as he acknowledges that he is being copied by a younger generation of actors, while he himself is

imitating a younger version of himself. Even when Bachchan asks the goon, and by reflexive implication the audience too, do you want to see the “original”, the original of course is never shown or heard. Instead his performance in the song turns out to be a re-mixed culture version of his earlier popular songs, where even the music and singing of lyrics are fused and digitally manipulated and enhanced through voice encoders. In true Bollywood masala fashion he is accompanied by an entourage of backing dancers, and these are exclusively younger white females who are used to add to the spectacle, play on an idea of his virile masculinity and titillate between race and gender at the same time. There is also a shift between the moment of danger when he enters the bar and is challenged by the thugs (i.e. a potential moment for action and violence), to a shift to a song and dance number in Bollywood style (song and dance as action); and with rapping in Hinglish too, the track goes beyond being simply Indian. The historicity in this pastiche then can never be a recourse to the “original”. It is perhaps better understood as a gesture towards invoking Bachchan’s larger than life stardom and onscreen persona, which is articulated through the various ingredients of popular Hindi cinema of which action or fights and stunts are only one portion. Bachchan’s geri-actions are further comprised of his enunciating melodrama, the photogeny of his looks and six foot tall physicality, and his deep masculine voice that is part of his phonogenic appeal. All of these add to his iconicity, alongside the performances of his songs and dance, and dialogue (cf. Mishra 2002). Bachchan’s geri-actions in this film are also part of a retro appeal to his yesteryears via his outlandish contemporary style, which itself is a homage to the 1970s and 1980s in the 2000s as jostling for space alongside each other. These periods are depicted as not at odds with each other, rather they are presented and carried off through his pastiche star status, which he deliberately and reflexively plays on-screen as larger than life.

Bachchan's geri-actions also continue online. He is a prolific social media user, daily updating his blog himself (<https://srbachchan.tumblr.com/>), and is seen active on Twitter on a regular basis (@srbachchan). This activity is part of maintaining and extending his star persona online, as very much in keeping with the promotion of his onscreen and other media activities. As part of this, Bachchan also comments on current affairs in India and around the world from time to time. Online celebrity can be viewed as a practice of self-presentation and personal management of stardom, away from previous industrial models of mass or top down studio management. As Marwick and boyd (2001:139) have observed about star interaction on sites such as Twitter:

...celebrity is practiced through the appearance and performance of 'backstage' access. Celebrity practitioners reveal what appears to be personal information to create a sense of intimacy between participant and follower, publicly acknowledge fans, and use language and cultural references to create affiliations with followers. Interactions with other celebrity practitioners and personalities give the impression of candid, uncensored looks at the people behind the personas.

Studies have also questioned the 'authenticity' of such online performances as to how sincere or staged they are, whether they create an appearance of possible accessibility to one's favourite star, or whether they are part of a carefully managed personal media strategy (Page 2012; Thomas 2014). Bachchan's social media posts appear to fall in the former categories of creating a persona of accessibility, showing sincere affection and adoration for his fans, sometimes through personal tweets that include pictures from his historical memorabilia, as well as allowing aspects of his personality to come through in his posts such as being humorous, self-deprecating, being witty, serious and contemplative. Bachchan also occupies a senior and privileged status among Bollywood stars online as evidenced through the way he is addressed by fans over the internet, as he is in real life, as 'Sir' or 'Mr Bachchan' when they write to, or address him in public. This latter aspect of his dignified

status allows him to appear frequently online while also keeping a professional distance. These aspects of Bachchan's online performativity are a continuum of his geri-actions, his plural activities, from the screen, off-screen, to virtual life. As a further illustration of these points, from one of his numerous posts to date, is the following from his blog:

DAY 3689

Jalsa, Mumbai

Apr 29/30, 2018

Sun/Mon 1:36 AM

Buddha Purnima tomorrow, April 30 th .. Buddha was also called by the name of Amitabh ..

Luxuriate in the company of dear friends and their invitations for the meeting of Highness at Lunch; change to dress adequately, for prayer meeting of a sudden bereavement in the life of a friend; change and dress for the run of the mill - the cast and crew trial of '102 Not Out' ..

Three different modes of three different occasions and the changes in clothing, mood and atmosphere .. three different modes of conversation and demeanour .. the three different facets of the city of Mumbai .. all legitimate and pure .. all reflecting the resilience of those of the presence .. all correct .. all done ..

But somewhere there is regret and a shocking stroke of what the city means to us all .. a city they say that never sleeps .. a city they say has the powers of great maturity and strength .. of being able to rise time and again phoenix like ready to face the most disastrous surroundings, in as natural a surrounding as possible ..

But is it truly resilience, or a desire to get back to work, else there may not be another day of deserted dishes and the noise of pollution.

So .. either be prepared to be having strength to face this unconfirmed truth, or leave the location ..

Thank you for all the love and wishes you give me ..

Facets of accessibility, distance, the star Bachchan, the Bachchan as a residence of Mumbai, and even Bachchan as the everyman/woman as philosopher can be seen in this post. It starts by numbering the entry as part of an ongoing record over 3689 days, noting the location of the posting – Bachchan's home address in Mumbai with the date and time stamp. Even in his golden years Bachchan is often active and busy as a working celebrity during the day and he posts in the early hours of the morning before he sleeps. This is a sign of a non-stop work ethic and professional attitude to his media career, including staying in touch with

his fans online. There is an attempt at recording the day, creating a personal archive as much for the benefit of Bachchan as well as his followers. From noting the onset of a religious birthday and serendipitous relationship to his own name, to spending time with close ones in the company of royalty, to attending a funeral, to promotional activities for the release of his then latest film *102 Not Out*, Bachchan's day has been eclectic and full, as his other posts also often reveal. The post's melancholic tone, musing over the activities of the day gives us access, or at least the performativity of access, to an old and new Bachchan that might possibly also speak to and for us. There appear to be elements of the reflective and angry young man persona - 'resilience, noise of pollution, having strength' - that equally sits alongside the older and more recent Bachchan who is at home and equally part of a neo-liberal and rapidly developing Mumbai city, with the challenges that it brings - 'disastrous surroundings, phoenix like, leave the location'.¹⁷ This post can be viewed as an extension of the star's online geri-actions: it is composed as a form of writing as socio-cultural action that is part of Bachchan's ongoing activities for increased economic and cultural capital with his followers online. The online arena is very much part of Bachchan's stage, on- and off-screen, that allow his geri-actions to be mediated and continue in the contemporary moment.

The geri-actions of Amitabh Bachchan are interesting as part of his varied career, which currently shows no signs of slowing down or retiring from the Indian film and related media industries. 'Action' is an interesting word in film studies as it invokes doing, excitement and spectacle in the cinema. Bachchan's geri-actions are more than just fighting and stunts in the Indian context as they are also a medley of emotions, song and dance, dialogues, and on-line entries and persona. Together, these not only help to construct and maintain his ongoing and ageing stardom, they also help us feel, through instances of

intertextual masala pastiche, a sense of our own historicity and pleasures with and through him.

Works Cited

Alfaro, María Jesús Martínez. 'Intertextuality: Origins and Development of the Concept', *Atlantis*, vol. 18, no. 1-2, 1996, pp. 268-285.

Arroyo, José. *Action/Spectacle Cinema: A Sight and Sound Reader*. BFI Publishing, 1999.

Buddah Hoga Tera Baap (2011) Story. Puri Jagannadh. Dir. Puri Jagannadh. Amitabh Bachchan Corporation Limited and Viacom 18 Motion Picture.

Devraj, Rajesh. *The Art of Bollywood*. Taschen GmbH, 2010.

Dudrah, Rajinder. 'Beyond World Cinema? The Dialectics of Black British Diasporic Cinema' in *Theorizing World Cinema*, edited by Lucia Nagib, Chris Perriam and Rajinder Dudrah, I.B. Tauris, 2012, pp.113-128.

Dyer, Richard. *Stars*. British Film Institute, 1979.

Dyer, Richard. *Heavenly Bodies: Film Stars and Society*. St Martin's Press, 1986.

Dyer, Richard. *Pastiche*. Routledge, 2007.

Ellis, John. *Visible Fictions: Cinema, Television, Video*. Routledge, 1982.

Fuery, Patrick. *New Developments in Film Theory*. Macmillan Press, 2000.

Holmes, Su and Sean Redmond. 'Editorial: A journal in *Celebrity Studies*', *Celebrity Studies*, vol.1, no.1, 2010, pp.1-10.

Lesic-Thomas, Andrea. 'Behind Bakhtin: Russian Formalism and Kristeva's Intertextuality', *Paragraph: A Journal of Modern Critical Theory*, vol. 28, no.3, 2005, pp. 1–20.

Marwick, Alice and danah boyd. 'To See and Be Seen: Celebrity Practice on Twitter', *Convergence*, vol.12, no.2, 2011, pp.139-158.

Mishra, Vijay. *Bollywood Cinema: Temples of Desire*. Routledge, 2002.

Mitra, Sreya. "'The Show of the Millennium": Screening the big-money quiz show and the Bollywood superstar,' *South Asian History and Culture*, vol.3, no.4, 2012, pp.566-582.

Mitra, Sreya. 'From 'Angry Young Man' to 'Benevolent Patriarch': Amitabh Bachchan, Bollywood stardom and the remaking of post-liberalization India', *South Asian Popular Culture*, vol.18, no.1, 2020, pp.63-78.

Mohammed, Khalid. *To Be Or Not To Be: Amitabh Bachchan*. Saraswati Creations, 2004.

Nagib, Lucia. 'Towards a Positive Definition of World Cinema' in *Remapping World Cinema*, edited by Stephanie Dennison and Song Hwee Lim, Wallflower Press, 2006, pp.30-37.

Nayar, Pramod. *Seeing Stars: Spectacle, Society and Celebrity Culture*. Sage, 2009.

Negra, Diane. *Off-White Hollywood: American Culture and Ethnic Female Stardom*. Routledge, 2001.

Page, Ruth. 'The Linguistics of Self-Branding and Micro-Celebrity in Twitter: The Role of Hashtags', *Discourse & Communication*, vol.6, no.2, 2012, pp. 181-201.

Pinto, Jerry. *Bollywood Posters*. Thames and Hudson, 2008.

Singh, Sunny. *Amitabh Bachchan*. BFI Publishing, 2017.

Somayaa, Bhawana. *Amitabh Bachchan - The Legend*. Macmillan, 1999.

Thomas, Sarah. 'Celebrity in the 'Twitterverse': history, authenticity and the multiplicity of stardom Situating the 'newness' of Twitter', *Celebrity Studies*, vol.5, no.3, 2014, pp.242-255.

Vincendeau, Ginette. *Stars and Stardom in French Cinema*. Routledge, 2000.

¹ As a term, geri-action cinema is often cited in two ways in the academic or trade press literature either as 'geriaction' or 'geri-action' cinema. In this article, I have opted to use it with its hyphen to draw attention to the way the term requires further critical exploration and elaboration, not least in the context of understandings about the workings of this sub-genre in the popular Indian cinema context.

² 'One-Man Industry (May 1-15, 1980)' *India Today* online <https://www.indiatoday.in/magazine/30-years-ago-on-india-today/story/20100308-one-man-industry-may-1-15-1980-742197-2010-02-26> accessed 16 June 2020.

³ See Mitra (2012) for a reading of Bachchan's performance as what she terms as the 'Benevolent Patriarch' in his role as the show's presenter. She argues that the success of *Kaun Banega Crorepati* resonated with India's nineties' economic liberalization policies and Amitabh Bachchan's star persona at that time.

⁴ In India for instance he has won several prestigious Filmfare awards, including Best Actor more than a few times, Best Supporting Actor, Lifetime Achievement Award, and Superstar of the Millennium.

⁵ 'Bollywood star tops the poll' <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/entertainment/381017.stm> accessed 16 June 2020.

⁶ For biographical accounts of Bachchan's life and career see for example Somayaa (1999), Mohammed (2004), and Singh (2017).

⁷ This summary and use of Lucia Nagib's formulation of polycentric world cinema has been taken from my earlier study of Black British diasporic cinema as contributing to debates in world cinema. See Dudrah (2012:113-114).

⁸ Masala - as in a mixture of spices to create an overall blend or flavour and hence a mixture of song and dance, social drama, romance, action, religion and family melodrama all featuring in the same film.

⁹ On popular Indian film posters see Pinto (2008) and Devraj (2010).

¹⁰ Invariably more academic studies have focussed on men, but more recent scholarship in cinema studies is redressing this imbalance. See for example, Neepa Majumdar's *Wanted Cultured Ladies Only: Female Stardom and Cinema in India, 1930s to 1950s* (2009); Lucy Bolton and Julie Wright's *Lasting Screen Stars* (2016), and Melanie Williams' *Female Stars of British Cinema* (2017).

¹¹ See also the Editorial of the inaugural issue of the *Celebrity Studies* journal, Holmes and Redmond (2010:5).

¹² See for example BTHB's figures at Box Office India: <https://boxofficeindia.com/movie.php?movieid=53> and reviews at Times of India: <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/entertainment/hindi/movie-reviews/buddah-hoga-tera-baap/movie-review/9052086.cms>, and Filmibeat: <https://www.filmibeat.com/telugu/news/2011/puri-jagannath-strikes-gold-bollywood-040711-aid0017.html> all accessed 16 June 2020.

¹³ See Mark Gallagher's review of Arroyo's book and the action/spectacle genre in general at: <https://www.nottingham.ac.uk/scope/documents/2001/november-2001/book-rev-nov-2001.pdf> accessed 16 June 2020.

¹⁴ See for instance Alfaro (1996), Feury (2000), Lesic-Thomas (2005).

¹⁵ The trailer can be viewed at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A7ZuPJXGuig> accessed 16 June 2020.

¹⁶ This song and dance number can be viewed at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uQtxwGXOjBo> accessed 16 June 2020.

¹⁷ See Mitra (2020) for a reading of Bachchan's persona from the 'Angry Young Man' to 'Benevolent Patriarch' as emblematic of India's shift from post-independence socialist values in 1947 to consumerism and millennial transformation by the 2000s.